

Dunbar Barrens State Natural Area

[Program Property Page](#)

Other Plans: [Interim Forest Management Plan](#)

Property Overview

Dunbar Barrens State Natural Area (SNA) is a 1,412-acre property located in northwestern Marinette County, in an area of extensive public lands, especially Marinette County Forest but also other state-owned lands, Forest Legacy lands (privately owned but open to public recreation), and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. Dunbar Barrens was designated as a SNA in 1973.

Dunbar Barrens SNA contains a pine barrens community that is part of an extensive, open landscape located on a gently rolling, pitted glacial outwash plain. Logging, grazing, periodic fires, and frost action in low pockets have maintained the open character of the barrens, and the site's composition and broad, sweeping prairie vistas are similar to presettlement barrens. Forests of aspen, oak, and pine surround the open areas, and low granitic outcrops are scattered throughout. Grasses and sedges dominate the vegetation and there is a well-developed shrub layer of blueberry, bearberry, prairie willow, and sweet fern. Herbaceous plants include rice grass, poverty oat grass, wintergreen, barren strawberry, and hawkweeds. The property also harbors a diverse and unusual lichen flora. Many grassland and grass-shrub bird species breed on the property.

Public Use and Recreation Facilities

The property is open to hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife viewing, hiking, cross-country skiing, and gathering of wild edibles. A primitive north-south road bisects the property, providing access, but there are no recreation facilities.

Recreational facilities are available on surrounding Marinette County lands.

Natural Resources Management

The property is managed as an ecological reference area by restoring, maintaining, and enhancing pine barrens through activities such as prescribed fire and timber harvesting. It is also intended to provide opportunities for research and education. Pockets of aspen, northern pin oak, and jack pine are established throughout existing prescribed burn units and are managed as barrens. Northern pink oak and red oak exist in stands surrounding the open barrens land and are managed with standard silvicultural methods to act as a transition between barrens and closed-canopy forest, creating a buffer with savanna-like structure.

Special Attributes

Dunbar Barrens SNA is encompassed within the Dunbar Barrens [Conservation Opportunity Area](#) identified in the [Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan](#). The property has also been identified as a [Wisconsin Important Bird Area](#), a site that provides critical habitat for birds, by the [Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative](#).

